

The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

The Well-Known Novelist and the Creator of the "Craig Kennedy" Stories

Presented in Collaboration With the Pathe Players and the Eclectic Film Company

Copyright, 1914, by the Star Company All Foreign Rights Reserved

TWENTY-THIRD EPISODE

THE TELLTALE HEART.

Elaine had dropped in one afternoon to see Kennedy at the laboratory. Craig was working over a straight-backed chair which stood close to the wall. On the arms were short straps, apparently to fasten down the arms of the sitter.

As they chatted, Elaine watched Craig curiously, examining the chair and especially the left arm, on which was placed a metal disk in such a way that the wrist of anyone sitting in the chair could be strapped in contact with it. Finally Kennedy attached a pair of electric wires from beneath the chair arm, connecting with the disk, and running down one of the legs, thence through a crack in the floor to the back room of the laboratory.

"What is it?" asked Elaine. "It looks like a death chair."

"Scarcely as bad as that," laughed Kennedy, taking up a large clock-faced dial which had a single hand evidently intended to be swung around by some force through the graduated scale on its face. "This is the sphygmograph—a scientific 'third degree,'" he explained, indicating both the chair and the dial. "It reads a person's thoughts and feelings through the pressure of the blood."

I was on my way from the Star office when I happened to spy a face in the crowd that seemed familiar. It was of a Chinaman, and, although I could not just place him, I knew that I had seen him somewhere before. I decided to play detective.

Not many minutes before, down in that secret den in which the serpent Wu concocted his villainies, that worthy had been at work again, tireless.

With subtle satisfaction, he had held in his hand, which was carefully gloved in rubber, a small glass tube, perhaps three-quarters of an inch in diameter.

In the tube was a minute but almost priceless particle of that strange element, radium. For a moment Wu regarded it, then took up a handkerchief that lay before him. Already he had ripped a stitch or two from the seam in the hem. He slipped the little radium tube into the hem of the handkerchief.

"Here," he said gruffly to a servant. "Take this letter and the other thing to Inez. You know the address."

On uptown he went until he came to a rather ordinary looking apartment house. He went in without discovering that I was following.

I glanced about. No one was watching me. Then, to be sure that I would recognize the house, I noted it by marking a small cross with a pencil on the stonework of the steps.

I did not know at the time, but I found out later that upstairs the messenger rapped at a door which was answered by a maid, a mulatto with a marked gypsy cast of features.

The maid opened the door into the hallway and admitted the messenger. Inez took the note and the lead case, waving to the maid to leave her. Then she tore open the note and read: "Have her blind the enclosed over her eyes. If in place three minutes, blindness will result in a few days."

"Tell the master I shall have it done as he directs," she said to the Chinaman as she followed him to the door.

Inez turned and went into the back room, her boudoir, where the maid was waiting. She brought out from a closet a rather gaudy yellow dress, a tambourine, a headdress and some other materials.

"Now, I want you to put this on," she instructed the maid. "Here in this box I have a handkerchief which I want you to use. Tie it over her eyes and keep it there—three minutes at least; longer if you can."

As I looked at the house outside, it immediately occurred to me to let Craig know what had happened, and I sought the nearest telephone booth and called the laboratory. Elaine had just gone when I called up, and I told my story of having seen and trailed the messenger and marked the house.

As I turned away at my end of the line Kennedy hastened to join me. I returned to the apartment, bent on carrying out Craig's orders. To my surprise, when I rang the bell, the door was opened by a colored maid. I had not expected to get in at all, but this seemed easy.

The maid brought me a chair, and I

took it. I did not notice, however, that she was careful to place it in a particular spot with the back to the wall.

I laid my hat and gloves on the table. As I did so, one glove must have dropped on the floor in an inconspicuous place by the leg of the table.

I sat down while the maid left me for a moment to call her mistress. In my best detective manner I gazed about the room, endeavoring to extract some clue. I was about to examine the room more closely when I heard someone coming and restrained my interest in the surroundings. Inez entered, and I rose.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked, with exaggerated politeness. "For what am I indebted to you for this visit?"

"Well," I replied, "perhaps you recall the last time we met."

Inez stood by the table, listening to me, I thought a bit mockingly. As I spoke her hand moved to the edge of the table. Suddenly, before I knew it, the room swam before my eyes and all was blackness.

Inez had moved her hand over and had pressed a secret knob. A bar in the wall just beside my head had sprung out, striking me a terrific blow and knocking me out.

The maid, who had run in, and Inez lifted me up, unconscious, and carried me into the back room.

It was scarcely five minutes after that Kennedy came to the entrance to the apartment. There he noted the mark which I had made. He had just decided to go in, when he heard a noise. It was Cissy, arrayed in all her glory, going out, with a parting word of instruction from Inez. He drew back into the angle of the hall.

I was still unconscious, and Inez was standing over me when she heard the tinkle of the bell.

Craig unconsciously took the very chair in which I had been sitting and sat down nonchalantly. A she saw him, she had given a little gasp.

As Craig watched her keenly, however, he was able to discover that, underneath her calm exterior, she was very nervous and excited.

"Well?" demanded Kennedy with an enigmatical smile. "You didn't expect to see me again—so soon, did you?" Inez seemed to be overcome for the moment. She rose and moved over to the table.

"Wait a minute," interrupted Kennedy. "Come back and sit down. I have something to say to you."

Nervously her hand gripped the table and moved along toward the secret knob.

Kennedy noticed it, but he had not moved his chair from the position in which it had been placed for me. At that moment, though, his eye fell on my glove, which I had inadvertently dropped on the floor. He reached down and picked it up. As he did so the bar in the wall flew out, just missing his head as he bent over.

Seeing that her scheme had failed, Inez made a dash for the door. Kennedy sprang to his feet and seized her.

Some minutes passed after Elaine had bound the handkerchief over her eyes. She sat opposite the gypsy, but, try as she would, she could see no vision that she did not herself conjure up.

"Mr. Kennedy on the telephone," announced Jennings.

"Will you answer it, auntie?" asked Elaine. "Tell him I'll call him up in a few minutes."

Aunt Josephine followed Jennings out and went down the hall to the library, where she picked up the receiver which Jennings had left.

"Oh, Mrs. Dodge, is that you?" Craig asked anxiously. "Where is Elaine?"

"She's in the conservatory. There's a gypsy here. They're sitting there like a couple of ninnies waiting for a vision of—"

"Good heavens," interrupted Craig, "not with a handkerchief over her eyes, is she? Yes? Quick—tell her to—rip it off yourself—quick—quick!"

Aunt Josephine knew Craig too well to stop to ask why. In great excitement she dropped the telephone and almost ran from the library. As she entered the conservatory she could hear the low droning voice of the gypsy. She had pulled the bandage from her own eyes and was watching Elaine keenly.

The gypsy was on her feet in an instant with an air of sneering triumph.

"You—you criminal!" cried Aunt Josephine. "Help! Jennings, help!"

In the apartment of Inez, Kennedy was now endeavoring to get Aunt Jo-

sephine on the telephone again. But neither he nor the central could seem to get any answer from the Dodge house.

Meanwhile I was slowly recovering consciousness and had managed to get on my feet. Dazed though I still was, I could see that Kennedy had discovered something terrible, in order to have had to neglect me so long.

He was working the receiver up and down frantically now. Finally he hung it up. By the expression on his face I gathered that, whatever it was, he feared the worst. His face wrinkled in thought, he gazed, perplexed, first at Inez, cold and defiant, then toward me. He seemed greatly surprised to see that I was myself again so soon, after being laid out flat.

"Walter," he asked earnestly, "do you think you could watch this girl now?"

"Why—yes—I can do it," I replied reassuringly.

"Then take this gun," he directed. "Don't let her touch a thing—and keep your eye peeled all the time. She's a tough customer. I want you, as soon as you feel able, to take her over to the laboratory and wait."

I nodded and he dashed out.

"Why, auntie, what's the matter?" asked Elaine, wondering at the suddenness with which the bandage had been torn from her eyes. "What does it all mean?"

"You—you criminal!" repeated Aunt Josephine accusingly at the gypsy, then turning to Elaine. "Why, Craig called up and warned me not to let her put anything over your eyes. I didn't wait to hear any more. I just ran in and tore the thing off."

The fake gypsy was looking eagerly about the room, apparently for a means of escape. Just then Jennings hurried in.

"Jennings," cried Aunt Josephine, "seize that woman!"

As Jennings approached her, the gypsy suddenly developed a remarkable strength. She gave him a shove that sent him reeling. His foot caught on the edge of the fountain and he staggered a minute, unable to recover his balance, then, with a great splash, fell in. The gypsy turned and fled through the palms, Elaine and Aunt Josephine following her.

She ran as far as she could, coming up to the glass wall that formed the inner end of the conservatory. Further retreat was impossible. She seized a little rustic chair and dashed it through the glass. Cautiously, she managed to make her way through the opening she had broken.

Jennings had, at this time, picked himself out of the fountain and, dripping, joined Elaine and Aunt Josephine in the chase. Out in the garden at last, the gypsy dropped down behind a thick bush.

At that moment a cab pulled up furiously before the house, and Kennedy leaped out and rushed in. The gypsy had gained just time enough. If she had gone on Kennedy might have seen her.

The others were, apparently, looking for her in every direction except the right one. She saw her chance. Stealthily she managed to slip out of the garden by the back way.

As Kennedy dashed down the hall and into the library he met Elaine's maid, Marie, as pale as a ghost.

"For heaven's sake, Marie," he panted, "where are they all?"

"In the conservatory, sir," she pointed. "Didn't you hear the glass break?"

"Glass?" he repeated, running ahead of her now.

Kennedy came upon Elaine, Aunt Josephine and Jennings still vainly searching about, just as they lost track of the gypsy.

"Where did she go—that way?" asked Jennings.

"Hang the gypsy," interrupted Craig. "Let her go—you missed her anyway. But, Elaine—tell me—what happened?"

Aunt Josephine reached down and picked up the handkerchief she had torn from Elaine's eyes. "She bound it over her eyes," she explained to Craig.

Kennedy examined the handkerchief closely. Evidently he was looking for something concealed in it and did not find it. Perplexed, he looked first from Elaine then to Aunt Josephine.

Are you looking for the gypsy's handkerchief?" Elaine asked finally, seeing his astonishment. Then she stooped and picked up another handkerchief from the floor. "Here it is. It didn't look very clean, so when she wasn't looking I dropped it and used my own."

Kennedy was speechless with relief. He took the other handkerchief and rapidly ran his hand over it. At last he came to a little hard lump in the hem. He ripped it open. There was the little tube of radium!

"You're lucky," he exclaimed. "If you had had that tube over your eyes it would have done its work in a few minutes. You might not feel it for some time, but you would have been blinded at least in a few days, if not hours."

Both Elaine and Aunt Josephine were overcome at their thought of the peril from which Elaine had been so narrowly rescued. Even Kennedy could not restrain a shudder. For

the moment he forgot even about Inez. Then, suddenly, he recollected. "Oh, by the way," he exclaimed. "I've had Walter take a woman over to the laboratory. He must be there by this time. I wish that you would get your things on and go over with me. I think that you can help me get something out of her. She's as cool, calm and calculating as a sphinx. But I have a scheme that may lead us at last up to this devilish Chinaman."

Elaine motioned to Marie and, when the maid returned, hurried into her coat and hat. It was only a few minutes after Kennedy had discovered that Elaine was safe that they started from the Dodge house.

Left alone with Inez, I began to follow out Kennedy's instructions.

"Come," I menaced with the gun. "Get your hat on. I want you to go with me. One word on the way and I'll have you arrested at once. Otherwise, you may get a chance."

I did not know it at the time, but just as we were about to start and were moving toward the door, the gypsy, breathless and fagged, reached the hallway of the apartment. She was about to go in when she heard Inez and myself going out. She dropped back into the convenient shelter which Kennedy had used before, and when we came out we did not see anyone in the hall. As we disappeared, she emerged and cautiously followed us.

In spite of my fears, Inez went without a scene to the laboratory. We entered, I, at least, not knowing that a pair of black eyes watched every movement. The fake gypsy saw us go in, then hastily came out of a doorway into which she had slipped and hurried downtown.

It was not long after I arrived, however, that Kennedy and Elaine joined me at the laboratory. Kennedy had evidently carefully prepared just what he intended to do. Quickly he forced Inez into the chair which he had already shown Elaine, and fastened the straps about her arms.

"Walter, will you and Elaine go into the next room?" he asked as he finished securing the woman.

A moment later he followed carrying the dial of the sphygmograph. He fastened it to the concealed wires that connected with the arms of the chair, describing to us in a whisper the action of the strange little instrument which by blood pressure read not only the disease of the heart, but even the secret emotions.

He had purposely left the door between the front and back rooms ajar, but he did not intend that Inez should hear this explanation.

"We know that Wu Fang's headquarters are on Pell street," he concluded to us in his muffled tone. "The sphygmograph will tell us the number, if we ask her the right questions. She may keep silent, but she cannot conceal her feelings from this instrument."

Already, although we did not know it, the gypsy had gone straight to Wu Fang's apartment. Wu had been getting anxious about his scheme when his servant announced that Inez's maid was outside.

"Bring her in immediately," Wu thundered.

The maid came in, frightened, blurted out what had happened to her and what she had seen at the apartment of her mistress. Wu listened, his face repressing the raging fury he felt.

"Quick—my street clothes," he ordered of his servant, then, as he threw them on, added to the gypsy. "Wait here until I return."

It was only a few minutes after he had been warned by the gypsy that Wu himself glided into the hall leading to the main room of the laboratory. He listened a moment, then, hearing nothing, was about to open the door with his skeleton key. As he started to do so, his eyes fell on the fire escape outside.

He reconsidered. Perhaps it would be best to reconnoiter. Snakelike he wormed his way up the fire escape which led to the back room. There, as we grouped ourselves about the sphygmograph while Kennedy explained his plans, Wu's sinister face gazed in at us for a moment, then withdrew. Silently he made his way down again to the ground.

In the back room Kennedy took his place near the doorway, while Elaine and I bent over the dial.

"Now, Walter," he began in an assumed rhetorical tone, "you remember we traced that fellow, Wu Fang, to Pell street. Let me see. What was that number? One?"

He paused. I saw the needle jump slightly at the mention of Pell street, then fall back at the number, "One."

"Two?" went on Kennedy.

The needle scarcely oscillated.

"Three—four—five," came slowly.

Inez's face, though we could not see it, was tense and set. She seemed determined not to betray a thing. Yet the harder she tried to control the outward expression of her feelings the more she betrayed herself by the inward blood pressure which the uncanny little instrument before us recorded.

As Kennedy kept on counting the indicator slowly, but steadily, rose,

registering her suppressed emotions, Elaine and I watched the dial, bending over it with intense interest.

Outside in the hall, Wu had again come to the laboratory door. This time he drew out his key and softly opened it and entered. For a moment he stood confronting Inez, alone in the chair. Quickly he raised his finger to his lips, indicating silence.

Kennedy kept on counting. As he neared the right number Wu drew a revolver and raised it high over his head. Twice he shot into the air.

Suddenly, just before he shots, the dial had unaccountably jumped ten or a dozen points. What did it mean? I held it up and Kennedy looked at it in wonder. He was about to take a step toward the laboratory when the pistol shots rang out. The dial hand fell back to zero!

We rushed into the laboratory. Inez lay back in the chair, apparently dead. Not a soul was in sight, but the hall door was open.

"Come on," shouted Kennedy, hurrying out into the hall, as I was about to stop before Inez.

I followed and Elaine came along after me, pausing at the door to watch us run down the hall.

Slowly a cabinet under the laboratory table back of her swung open, and the evil, murderous face of the Chinese master criminal appeared from the refuge to which he had dropped after the shots which he had fired to frighten Inez. Silently he crept toward Elaine, standing with her back to him.

With one powerful movement he swept Elaine back into the laboratory and to the floor and slammed the door, locking it. Another instant and he ran to Inez and unfastened her. She had merely fainted and was now coming to.

Down the hall we had discovered no one when suddenly we heard the stifled scream of Elaine. Back we rushed to the door. But it was locked and jammed.

Wu had finished releasing Inez by this time and, with her, rushed into the back room. As he did so Elaine managed to get to her feet and follow in time to see Wu smash the window to the fire-escape with a chair and half shove Inez through to safety.

He was about to follow when he spied the sphygmograph and seized it. That brought him face to face with Elaine. She snatched the record from him. With an oath he struggled with her for it.

By this time Kennedy and I had forced the door and were in the outer laboratory.

Wu had bent Elaine back over the table and had drawn a long knife. As he poised it over her he heard us coming. Our shouts seemed to give Elaine redoubled strength. She broke away just as Wu stabbed furiously, and the knife point was deflected by the sphygmograph.

There was not an instant to lose, and Wu fairly dived out of the window. As we rushed in Kennedy paused to reassure himself of Elaine's safety, but I plunged after Wu, my revolver drawn.

Wildly I shot down from the window at his retreating form. He had almost reached the ground when I saw him stagger and fall the rest of the way. One of my shots had taken effect, but I had used them all.

I started after him. But as he slid the last two or three steps into a heap on the ground, Inez caught him in her arms. Half supporting, half pulling, she managed to assist the dazed and wounded criminal along. At the curb was a closed car, with a driver, waiting. She shoved him in and tumbled in after him herself, as the car moved swiftly away.

By this time I had reached the ground and reloaded my gun as I ran along. I fired several shots. But, though I struck the car, I don't think I did any damage, for it continued to gain speed. The chase was hopeless, and I stopped, disgusted.

Back in the laboratory, as I returned through the window, I saw that the strain had been too much for Elaine. Now that it was over, she had fainted, and Kennedy was just bringing her around.

"Confound him," I exclaimed. "I wounded him, but the girl got him away from us again."

"Oh," murmured Elaine, faintly catching my words. "I heard the shots. I was hoping you had ended it all this time."

For the moment, in his relief at seeing Elaine still safe, Kennedy seemed to have forgotten all about Wu. My words recalled him.

"Never mind," he reassured, as he tapped the little sphygmograph. "Not counting the great jump of the indicator when Inez discovered Wu before her, it registered the highest tension when I mentioned No. 14 Pell street. We shall find his den not far from that."

We gathered about Craig while Elaine looked at him elated.

"Then you have forged the last link," she cried, seizing both his hands in her own.

Kennedy merely smiled and shook his head gravely.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)